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SUBJECT: SINGAPORE MOVES FROM OBSERVER TO MEMBER OF UNESCO

¶1. (U) Singapore rejoined the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) October 8, after pulling out of the organization 22 years ago. Singapore became a full member of UNESCO in 1965 but withdrew from the group in 1985 citing unfair dues calculations and unhappiness with UNESCO's policies and management. Singapore was an Observer for the past two years. The Ministry of Education issued a press release announcing the change and unveiling details of Singapore's National Commission for UNESCO. The Commission, comprising three Sub-Commissions focusing on Education, Science, Culture and Information, will be set up by the end of the year. It will plan and coordinate Singapore's activities and programs in UNESCO. Minister of State for Education and Manpower Mr. Gan Kim Yong is to be Chairman of the National Commission.

¶2. (U) A Ministry of Education spokesman said that Singapore looks forward to collaborating with and learning from other UNESCO member states in the key areas of education, science and culture. The Ministry spokesman also announced Gan will lead a Singapore delegation to attend the 34th session of the UNESCO General Conference in Paris, France on 16 October comprised of officials from the Ministries of Education, Foreign Affairs, The Environment and Water Resources, and the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts.

¶3. (U) Minister Gan is quoted in an October 8 Straits Times article saying that it is in "Singapore's interest" to engage in UNESCO. Singapore can learn from other member countries how to improve its education system, he said, and is "keen on cultural and scientific exchanges with other UNESCO members in its push to build a knowledge-based economy."

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